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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: Somalia - Meeting With President Yusuf

Classified by Ambassador Michael Ranneberger for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

REF: A) Nairobi 1234 B) Nairobi 1183

Summary

¶1. (C) Somalia President Abdullahi Yusuf met with the Ambassador and Special Envoy to discuss his trip to the United States and next steps for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to take advantage of this momentum. Yusuf highlighted the deteriorating security environment and urged us to press Ethiopia to continue their support. Somalia's President also requested us to help him obtain financial assistance from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations. Yusuf was supportive of direct talks with the opposition in Djibouti and said he authorized the TFG delegation to sign a ceasefire agreement. Yusuf spoke of ongoing differences with Prime Minister Hussein but indicated that he is committed to keep working with the PM and maintain cohesion within the TFG. End Summary.

Marshalling Support in the U.S.

¶2. (C) Abdullahi Yusuf, President of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG), called on the Ambassador and Special Envoy on May 10 after arriving in Nairobi on his way to Mogadishu. The TFG President was returning to Somalia after his visit to the U.S., UK, and France and spoke highly of his time in New York and Washington. The Ambassador told President Yusuf that his message of improving security, encouraging peace, and promoting reconciliation efforts was well-received. Yusuf thanked us for arranging the trip and the "excellent" meetings with both the executive and legislative branches of the USG. "Something good will come out of this trip," he opined.

¶3. (C) Yusuf told us he met in New York with representatives from UN Security Council members UK, France, China, and Italy. He emphasized the strong support from Italy and China on the political transition and for a UN peacekeeping operation. Yusuf said that while Somalia appreciates the effort of Uganda and Burundi in AMISOM, a robust UN force will be better. However, Yusuf admitted, a peacekeeping force cannot do anything unless there is peace to enforce. While expressing skepticism, Yusuf indicated his support for talks with the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) in Djibouti and their potential to lead to peace negotiations.

Djibouti Talks

¶4. (C) President Yusuf said he doubts that anything would come of the talks because the ARS leadership publicly stated that it does not recognize the TFG "puppets of Ethiopia." When discussing the ARS position to meet only with the UN (Ref A), Yusuf chuckled and said, "The starting day is always difficult." He acknowledged a clear

distinction between the ARS and the Shabaab, stating that "al-Shabaab is independent and not under the umbrella of the Asmara-based group." At the same time, Yusuf said he believes ARS Chairman Sheikh Sherif is "close to al-Shabaab, not like the parliamentarians and others in the ARS." Yusuf concluded by saying, "If we are lucky, some will agree to negotiate."

15. (C) The President averred that if the TFG and the ARS eventually negotiate, then both sides will have to stop fighting. While acknowledging that the ARS cannot control the Shabaab, Yusuf nonetheless expressed a commitment to try and move forward a dialogue with the opposition. The President agreed unequivocally that a discussion of a ceasefire arrangement must be on the agenda. "If so, my side will sign," President Yusuf said. He asked us to compel the ARS to do the same.

Ethiopia

16. (C) Yusuf emphasized his continued commitment to establishing security in Somalia. "If we cannot manage this, then nothing else can be done," he said. Yusuf urged the U.S. to do all it can to support the continued presence of Ethiopia until a UN force can be deployed. He asked for continued U.S. political and financial support for Prime Minister Meles and his government in order to avert any "internal problems" that would undoubtedly ensue should there be a regime change in Ethiopia. Toward the end of the meeting he asked pointedly, "Who will encourage the Ethiopians to stay?" He continued, "I cannot accept defeat, I have to do whatever I can." (Comment: Yusuf clearly linked the presence of Ethiopia with averting TFG defeat. End Comment).

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17. (C) The Special Envoy responded that the U.S. has provided funding for some of the Ethiopian training of Somali security forces, but that the bulk of our assistance has gone to strengthening AMISOM. We also mentioned that all donors must take a more long-term view which should be helped by the security sector assessment announced at the International Contact Group meeting in Oslo. Yusuf pledged to continue to press European countries, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states to follow through on pledges for support to the security sector.

Saudi Arabia

18. (C) President Yusuf confirmed what the Prime Minister told us about receiving funds from Oman (Ref B). Yusuf sent fellow sub-clan member and former warlord General Morgan as his envoy to secure financial support from the Gulf States. He said that the government of Oman did not trust General Morgan enough to release funds. Yusuf said he was forced to send General Darawish who successfully obtained USD 3 million. Yusuf did not say what the government planned to do with the funds.

19. (C) Yusuf blamed the failure to obtain additional funds from Saudi Arabia on the Prime Minister's inexperience. Yusuf explained that he agreed with King Abdullah at the OIC conference in Dakar to send two ministers to Saudi Arabia and that at the last minute, the Prime Minister insisted that he also make the trip. Yusuf said that since the PM was not able to see the King, "We got nothing." He disparaged the Prime Minister's diplomatic skills.

Al-Shabaab After Ayrow

110. (C) President Yusuf congratulated the U.S. on eliminating Aden Hashi Ayrow, and then remarked that it is now necessary to add Hassan al-Turki and Muhktar Robow to the list. When asked who he believes will assume leadership of the Shabaab, Yusuf replied that the new leader must be from one of the Hawiye/Haber Gedir sub-clans. He said that though both would like to, it would be impossible for either

al-Turki (Darood/Absame/Ogadeni) or Robow (Rahanweyn/Mirifle/Leysan) to assume this role. Yusuf said that we must continue to work hard to produce the intelligence that made this type of operation possible. These "bad men" need to know that even those within their inner circle will help to eliminate them.

Next Steps for the TFG

¶11. (C) President Yusuf seemed resigned to keep working with the Prime Minister, because "only Parliament has the power to remove him." But Yusuf also said that if the Prime Minister continues to operate without consultation and based solely on his own agenda, he will lose the confidence of parliamentarians. During the conversation, Yusuf plainly stated that he is "not out to get the Prime Minister." The President told us that once he returns to Mogadishu, he planned to bring the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Parliament together to "work hard and do things right." We encouraged Yusuf to keep working as a team with the Prime Minister because there is so little time left to do the work necessary to prepare for the transition.

RANNEBERGER